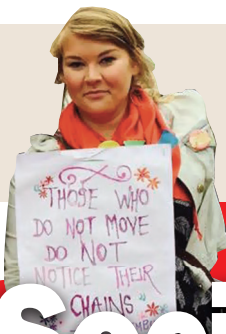


SNP & fracking: the risks are unacceptable, says Allan Grogan
• see page 4

Independence: indyref #2 can not be won by a one-party campaign, says Jenni Gunn
• see page 5

£1 • issue 466 • 16th October – 5th November 2015
scottishsocialistvoice.wordpress.com



Scottish Socialist Voice

PROFIT • PEOPLE • PEOPLE
PEOPLE • PEOPLE • PROFIT

Standing up for which Scotland?

- **Public water privatised**
- **CalMac ferries in privateers' sights**
- **Union-busters woo SNP over fracking**

ACTION NOT WORDS!

- **fight Tory and SNP cuts**
- **defend jobs and services**
- **£10-an-hour for all**

PHOTO: Craig Maclean



ScottishSocialistVoice.wordpress.com



/ScottishSocialistVoice



@ssv_voice

Young Scottish Socialists (YSS) launches in Glasgow



INITIAL STEPS towards the re-formation of the SSP's youth wing took place at the recent '21st Century Socialism' event in Glasgow (see report on page 12). There will now be a series of meetings to debate the way forward, its structure, and other issues for the Young Scottish Socialists. We would encourage all our young readers, aged under 26, to get involved and make YSS a breath of fresh air.

Scottish Socialist Voice SUBSCRIPTIONS

To subscribe, see: scottishsocialistvoice.wordpress.com or fill in this form and send it to: SSV, Suite 370, Central Chambers, 93 Hope St, Glasgow G2 6LD. Phone: 07810205747. Cheques payable to 'Scottish Socialist Voice'

Name.....

Address.....

Phone.....

Email.....

☐ £5 for 2 issues ☐ £10 for 4 issues ☐ £20 for 8 issues



Join the SSP

Fill in this form and send it to: Scottish Socialist Party, Suite 370, 4th Floor, Central Chambers, 93 Hope St, Glasgow G2 6LD. Or phone: 07810205747. Or join the SSP online: scottishsocialistparty.org/join-us

☐ I would like to join the Scottish Socialist Party

☐ I would like more info on the Scottish Socialist Party

Name.....

Address.....

Phone.....

Email.....

by Ken Ferguson

THE LONG Teflon-coated SNP administration in Holyrood is facing growing turbulence as it struggles to square its public image as a left wing anti-austerity government with the reality of a growing list of pro-business policy calls.

Leading the field (as we discuss elsewhere in this *Voice*) is the deeply unpopular issue of fracking where opposition—as witnessed by the recent Forth Bridge protest—is mushrooming.

There can be no doubt that it was this opposition that forced the Holyrood government to extend its moratorium on fracking supposedly to await more research. Of course in reality, despite the jubilation in some quarters, this is a very limited victory owing much more to the needs of party and policy management than principled opposition to this dangerous technology.

The announcement drew the teeth from any possible opposition at the party's Aberdeen conference. It also placated Energy Secretary Fergus Ewing who has reportedly considered resignation if it is banned. The scale of vested interests backing fracking is formidable and centres on the increasingly powerful union busting INEOS boss Jim Ratcliffe.

Public opposition vs profits

Fresh from humiliating the Grangemouth workforce and their union UNITE he has now bought twelve North Sea gas fields from a Russian oligarch and when, soon, the SNP need to choose between the public opposition to fracking or INEOS profits much will be revealed about their priorities. This reality was starkly spotlighted when, within 24 hours of the moratorium announcement, INEOS were given the nod to carry out “test” drilling to pave the way for fracking.

Nor are the omens any brighter on privatisation where both on CalMac ferries and Scottish Water the SNP have pled that the EU forces them to put them out to tender beyond the public sector.

It took determined strike action by ferry crew members of the RMT to force a deal which protects their wages and conditions and quite possibly makes the operation unattractive to the private sector sharks circling the ferries.

But it was the decision to award polluting privateer Anglia Water the

Water privatised, ferries tendered, fracking test drills roll as SNP govern

PHOTO: Craig Maclean



PARTY OF THE WORKERS? the SNP stood by and watched 117 porters at Ninewells and Royal Victoria Hospitals launch strike action earlier this year, demanding compensation after being underpaid for over a decade

£350million contract to supply the NHS, Scottish Parliament, prisons, councils and schools that flushed out the truth about the SNP's “the EU made us do it” defence of the decision.

In a scathing report produced by RISE, Scotland's Left Alliance, the anti-union and polluting record of Anglia is laid bare. But the dynamite at the heart of the RISE document is the revelation that the claim that the contract had to go to tender is untrue.

RISE sought advice from Dr Marco Goldoni of Glasgow University who is an expert on EU law and in the report he gives a detailed explanation of why the Scottish Government did not have to put the contract out tender because of EU law.

Despite the fact that it has been widely reported, the report's conclusions have gone unchallenged by the Scottish Government.

The truth is that the “EU made me” excuse is simply a fig leaf and raises disturbing questions about the reality behind the rhetoric of support for public services and coming as it does hard on the heels of the award of the ScotRail franchise to Dutch state firm Abellio, a range of council cuts and the CalMac tender makes the public service support look skin deep.

There is a battle going on for the direction of the SNP government which frankly gives the lie to the carefully crafted image of the party as a natural home for socialists. At best the jury is out on how the tension between the interests of powerful profiteers such as INEOS and those of people and planet are to be resolved.

Hold SNP to account

So far, the evidence is not encouraging and the concessions to the powerful make a strong case for other voices to be in Holyrood to both challenge the powerful and hold the SNP to account.

It is in this context that the need for pro-independence MSPs from parties other than the SNP in the next Holyrood parliament is a vital priority and essential to the pursuit of both the immediate demand for a second referendum and the ongoing battles on wages, benefits and other social demands.

Given that the Greens intend to put the referendum to an EU style “citizens’ initiative” consultation and could, if this say no oppose a second indyref then for pro-independence progressive opinion it is increasingly clear that a second vote for RISE, Scotland's Left Alliance, is the realistic choice.

by Allan Grogan

THOMAS CARLYLE once wrote that “the greatest of faults... is to be conscious of none”. I am often reminded of this as I see the Scottish Government attempt to be all things to all people, while rarely stating the hand they wish to play. Nowhere is this more evident than in their position on fracking as a viable energy source for Scotland.

Throughout the referendum, the Yes movement attracted people from a plethora of movements, parties, and political campaigns—nationalists, socialists, and environmentalists joined forces with campaigns to bin the Bedroom Tax, ban the bomb and many more, including the campaign to outlaw fracking of shale gas and coal bed methane.

Since last September, the SNP have been keen to be seen to maintain support for these progressive causes, but do so at the least amount of political expense. This is why, rather than state unqualified opposition to fracking, they announced a moratorium in January and only recently extended it to offshore underground coal gasification (UCG). The question that must be asked is: why are the Scottish Government refusing to rule out this type of energy creation outright?

Unacceptable risks

For those unaware, hydraulic fracturing or “fracking” is the process of drilling and injecting fluid into the ground at high pressure in order to fracture shale rocks containing natural gas. This is done through pipelines upwards of 10,000 feet in depth. While fracking could bring about a more secure energy supply, the environmental and humanitarian risks are unacceptable.



FERGUS EWING: SNP minister let INEOS test drill after he heralded a fracking moratorium

Where is the SNP going on fracking?

The fracking fluid itself contains up to 600 chemicals, including known carcinogens and toxins such as lead, uranium, mercury, ethylene glycol, methanol, hydrochloric acid and formaldehyde. It has been reported that methane concentrations are 17 times higher than normal in drinking water wells near fracking sites.

Despite the industry being in its relative infancy, there have been over 1,000 cases of water contamination next to gas drilling areas, including cases of sensory, respiratory and neurological damage due to contaminated water.

The very nature of this venture and the effects it can have should make anyone wary to sign off on this, let alone a government which has dependable oil and gas resources and 25 per cent of the EU’s renewable energy potential at its disposal.

UCG is, if anything, more dangerous, involving the partial combustion of underground coal before the syngas by-product is captured for use on the surface. This procedure is highly experimental, and less developed than methane and shale gas fracking.

While a great number of SNP members will no doubt purchase a Frack Off! badge at the SNP conference, they will also hear the spin on fracking from INEOS, who have paid the SNP £4,000 for a stall at their event. While this does not in itself signal support, it is a curious position to allow a company which is continuing to extend its shale gas licenses access to your conference.

Ineos Chief Executive Gary Haywood has proclaimed that shale gas is a “once in a lifetime opportunity that the UK can’t afford to miss”. You have to ask yourself whether allowing his company at this conference is a signal that the SNP are willing to consider fracking—or just that their scruples go out the window where money is involved.

More concerning is the ambivalence that Energy Minister Fergus Ewing has shown regarding fracking, refusing to declare Scotland as a fracking-free zone. Make no mistake: a moratorium is not a ban, but merely a delay, and one which many are starting to believe is solely designed to allow the SNP to continue being all things

to all people for the next election cycle. While the Scottish Socialist Party passed opposition to fracking at our 2014 conference and have called for the gas industry to be returned to public hands, the SNP continue to try to keep everyone on-side, refusing to make the hard decisions for which they were elected.

This may have to change; the shine of the SNP seems to be coming off for many who are starting to see the long game. Campaigns have begun in earnest to pressure the Scottish Government into announcing the complete rejection of fracking and UCG.

These campaigns are gaining momentum, with over 2,000 people protesting on the Forth Road Bridge, joined in solidarity by campaigners in the rest of the UK and as far afield as Australia. For many, the latest moratorium announcement is a sign that this government cannot be trusted to act decisively on fracking and may, in some quarters, even support the policy.

Blind faith in the SNP

More worrying is the belief of a great number of SNP members that their party can do no wrong. Their full trust will lead them headfirst into a harsh reality if they do not realise that, eventually, the SNP will need to make a decision on fracking.

If current form is to be believed, this pro-business party may end up granting access to Ineos to begin fracking in Scotland. The campaign against this is vital, and public protest must be loud enough for Fergus Ewing to receive the message loud and clear.

The Scottish Socialist Party is proud to play a role in the campaign against fracking. We have laid out our position clearly and concisely: the environmental dangers of fracking are not worth the potential economic gains. This is especially the case when there are so many other viable alternative energy sources in this country.

This Scottish Government needs to unequivocally announce that fracking will be banned in Scotland and they need to do so before the Scottish Parliament elections. If they don’t, their members may soon regret placing such blind faith in the SNP.

by Jenni Gunn

THE YES campaign and the referendum as a whole served as an intense political education for many Scots—myself included. The experience is one that many campaigners will never forget: we all felt united in a feeling of hope and belief in something better. We all fought for independence—but what *kind* of independence?

The independence campaign represented itself as a diverse movement buoyed by voices from across the political spectrum: it's diversity as well as its prominence within social movements and community groups gave it political clout and as well as credibility.

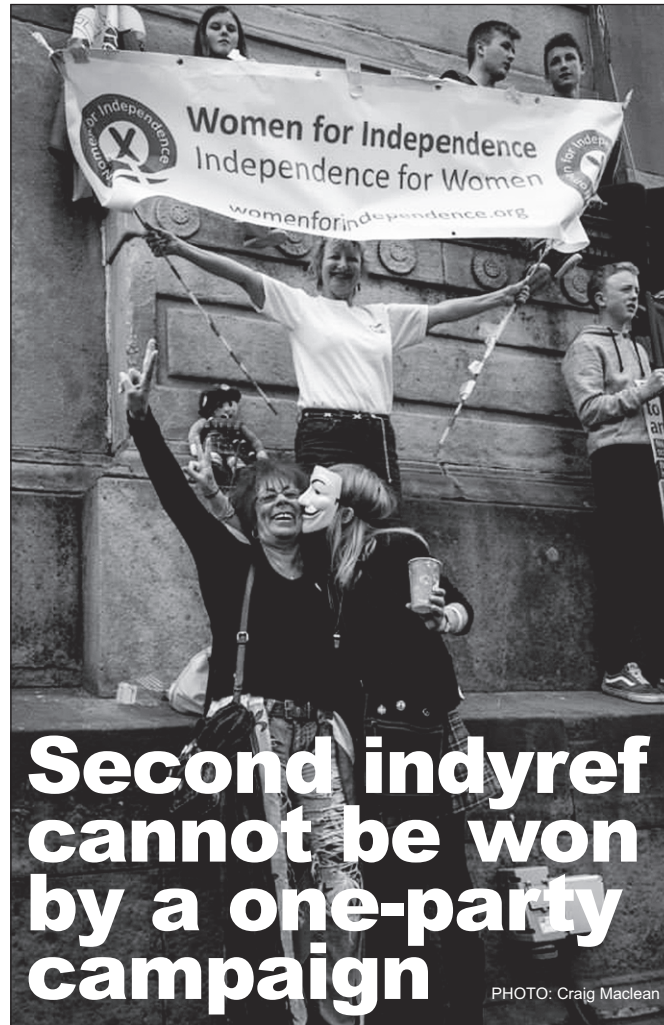
The SNP could never have hoped to change the political discourse in Scotland nor terrify the Westminster elite alone: it was the ideas of the left and the desire for social change that created the groundswell that saw the Yes campaign come tantalisingly close to victory.

Political traditions

However, since that fateful day in September 2014, the independence movement has consistently been plagued by prevailing aspersions that the SNP are the sole guardians of a movement which encompassed a plethora of political traditions.

Yes campaigners cannot let this narrative prevail. Why? We still have a referendum to win. There is a constituency of voters that can be convinced of our case that will never vote SNP. Secondly, the SNP are the party of government, and all active citizens have a right, some may argue a responsibility, to call out our elected representatives when we see contradictions between rhetoric and policy.

These contradictions within the SNP have been well documented. The SNP's opposition to Trident nuclear weapons were heartily welcomed



Second indyref cannot be won by a one-party campaign

PHOTO: Craig Maclean

among Scotland's left as well as among anti-nuclear and anti-war campaigners.

However, the party's commitment to Scotland's NATO membership not only showed an inherent contradiction visible to the wider campaign for independence, but facilitated the resignation of two MSPs (John Finnie and Jean Urquhart) who could not reconcile their anti-nuclear stance with the leadership's position on NATO.

The SNP continue to oppose the undemocratic and elitist House of Lords, but refuse to put forward a convincing opposition to monarchical rule, which lies at the heart of a political system that undermines democracy and celebrates "the divine right of kings."

Further contradictions include the SNP's dogmatic stance on currency union, despite the fact that non-SNP members on the Yes Scotland

advisory board argued that an independent Scottish currency would not only make economic sense but would provide a clear, undiluted policy to voters that left no ambiguity.

Many commentators, including the SNP's own Jim Sillars, have laid a heavy load at the SNP's door for refusing to budge on the currency issue.

Recent political mistakes by the SNP, most notably in the controversy surrounding the Anglian water contract, are shedding light on the rift between SNP rhetoric on privatisation and their track record in government.

Let me be clear—the SNP have made many important successes in government, and without the SNP the movement for independence may never have materialised into the movement that swept the length and breadth of Scotland. However, to let the SNP exert

ownership over a movement that sought not to represent one Scotland, but the many Scotlands that we inhabit, would be a betrayal of what the movement was all about—a new politics, a strengthened democracy, a voice for ordinary citizens.

The independence movement cannot be encapsulated in a single party, because that is not how movements are created.

Movements that change society are always led from below, and this is why the independence movement must fight for a diversity of voices in support of independence and not capitulate to the mantra of "singing from the same hymn sheet."

As a member of the SSP, during the independence campaign I argued for an alternative vision for an independent Scotland from what was laid out by the SNP in the White Paper. But as a member of various other pro-independence groups, such as Women for Independence and RIC, I was consistently surrounded by people with differing visions of what an independent Scotland would look like.

Diversity of voices

Not only did this influence my own outlook, but it tested by own beliefs and strengthened my own convictions. The diversity of voices inspired creativity within the Yes campaign that Better Together, with its negative campaign strategy, could never hope to emulate.

If we are to have any hope of achieving the radical social change that we hope independence will bring, we have to ensure that our campaign for Yes amplifies alternate visions for Scotland.

Our job on the left is to argue the case for a socialist Scotland, a democratic republic, that puts the millions before the millionaires, that puts our vital services before business interests: a vision without the latent contradictions of the SNP.

by *Richie Venton,*
SSP national workplace organiser

AT ITS more general level, the SNP 'Social Partnership' model includes very seductive sounding proposals of 'worker directors' on company boards—emulating the various versions practiced by 14 out of 28 EU countries—with the White Paper favouring "employee representation to bolster long term decision-making and improve industrial relations."

Compared with the way unions have been cast out into the industrial Siberian steppes by successive Westminster governments, frozen out of all discussion and decisions, this looks like a warm, welcoming hearth fire.

But it's riddled with pitfalls and potential traps.

If elected workers' representatives were given access to discussions on employers' plans, that would be a radical breakthrough compared, for instance, with the ruthless dictatorship of capital—in the form of one man!—on display in 2013 at Grangemouth.

INEOS owner and boss Jim Ratcliffe held the entire Grangemouth workforce, and indeed the Scottish Government and people to ransom, shutting down the biggest plant in the country to enforce his union-smashing plans.

Gagged and bound

If union reps had access to company secret accounts, that would be a huge advantage in protecting workers and communities from the shenanigans of the profiteers.

But in those other countries with 'worker directors', they are usually gagged from speaking about any company secrets, and frequently bound hand and foot to the majority decisions of the boards of directors they have a token place or two on.

Close to home, that's the situation with so-called worker directors on NHS area boards. They are entirely compromised in the eyes of trade unionists.

WORKER DIRECTORS: PARTNERSHIP OR PAPERING OVER THE CRACKS?

And the example lauded in the SNP's White Paper—as a model of 'Worker Directors' enacting their 'social partnership'—was that of First Group, which has had a 'worker director' on its board since the firm's formation in 1989.

Where the hell was this 'voice of workers' when RMT members on First ScotRail were compelled to stage strikes against savage attacks on their conditions a few years ago? I don't recall meeting him on the picket lines, nor hearing him side with the workers he claims to represent in the media. Nor condemning the revelations at the time that the SNP government had underwritten any losses to First ScotRail as a result of strike action.

Is that what social partnership—and worker directors—amounts to?!

The SNP's belief in Social Partnership is pleasant mood music to the ears of thousands of workers expelled into the wilderness by employers and governments hell-bent on slashing jobs, wages, conditions and public services.

But it's anything but original, and a slippery road to setbacks for workers and working class communities, which the likes of the STUC would be wise to heed as they (quite rightly) engage with the SNP government and SNP MPs.

Back in the days of the 1974-9 Labour government—'Old Labour', with a powerful trade union influence and sizeable socialist wing in the party—a

previous version of this 'social partnership' notion was practiced.

Called the Social Contract, it was initially popular amongst layers of the lowest-paid workers, as they gained reasonable pay rises in Phase I of this agreement between the tops of the unions, employers and the Wilson/Callaghan Labour government.

But it faced its own inevitable doom, because whilst the government had the power to control (that is, suppress) workers' wages, it lacked the power to control prices in a capitalist market economy. So workers suffered ferocious pay cuts as inflation ripped through the roof; the (left) trade union architects of this Social Contract became discredited as they tried to stop members striking for compensatory pay increases; workers became bitter and confused; Labour was blamed and defeated; and the inglorious butcher of the working class, Maggie Thatcher, won office by default in 1979.

Horrendous crises

More recently, in the South of Ireland, as working people faced decimation to pay for the horrendous crises not of their making, the tops of the trade union movement entered a succession of 'National Agreements'—based on the same 'social partnership' model.

This left workers hamstringed in their attempts to resist austerity measures, with jobs and incomes slaughtered on the altar of protecting profit margins and targets on cuts to public expenditure.

So in contradiction to the seductive sounding alternative to red-in-tooth-and-claw Toryism, the SNP's 'social partnership' will fail to meet the aspirations of the very workers attracted to it right

“ INEOS boss Jim Ratcliffe held the entire Grangemouth workforce and the Scottish Government to ransom, shutting down Scotland's biggest plant to enforce his union-smashing plans...



now. Under the hammer blows of cuts to the Scottish budget by Westminster, the SNP faces a harsh choice, a real test of whose side they're on: they'll have to either stand up and defy the Tory cuts, refuse to pass them on, and mobilize a mass rebellion of the Scottish people—to demand back the £billions stolen by Westminster—or they'll end up slashing jobs, wages and public services, whilst trying to devolve the blame to local councils, colleges and Health Boards. They'll have to choose to defy or destroy.

The Tories' ideological crusade to slash the share of wealth going to workers through austerity and privatisation is irreconcilable with the needs of the working class majority population. To compromise with them would be to shatter the hopes of those who rejected them, including the masses of Scots who voted SNP.

Social partnership is an attempt to paper over the chasm between the interests of the working class and the 1 per cent who possess most of the wealth.

Of course in an independent socialist Scotland—as fought for by the SSP—elected, accountable workers'

representatives should be the majority on workplace committees to control day-to-day operations and conditions.

The majority on the boards of management of nationalised industries and services, and of local cooperatives, should be made up of working class representatives—elected, subject to recall, and paid the average skilled wage.

Selfish profit interests

But that's on the basis of a society where the core of the economy is under democratic public ownership—a world apart from the present setup, where a handful of billionaires, bankers and hedge fund managers control the majority of the economy.

A socialist Scotland would usher in genuine 'social partnership', where the workers in each industry or service, alongside the wider community, and elected local and national governments, could collaborate for the betterment of the entire population—not the narrow, selfish profit interests of a handful.

That's the vision of the SSP; a starkly different picture to the SNP's 'social partnership'.

The RMT is fighting for ferries

RMT OFFICIALS, activists and representatives were out in force in Oban at the national MOD festival on Saturday 17 October as the union continues to fight any attempt to place lifeline CalMac ferry services in the hands of the profiteering spivs and speculators of Serco.

RMT activists handed out badges and stickers as well as postcards for members of the public to complete and return freepost to their MSP with the clear message "Keep CalMac Public".

The union had a lively presence at the pier in the town as well as in the square and other town centre locations as RMT continues to build broad support amongst communities across Scotland to keep public services under public control.

RMT General Secretary Mick Cash said:

"RMT is working with politicians and communities across Scotland as we fight to keep CalMac out of the claws of SERCO and firmly in public hands.

"This weekend's events in Oban are part of a national campaign that is drawing in widespread support and which those in political power will simply not be able to ignore."



RMT: were out in force at the national MOD Gaelic Festival PHOTO: Craig Maclean

by Sandra Webster, SSP
national co-spokesperson

How can you work your way out of poverty?

THE TORY party conference last week—if you could stomach watching it—was a celebration of a Tory majority government. They even claimed that, as Labour under Corbyn “shifted to the left”, they would be the centralist party of “blue collar” workers.

Ironically it is low and middle earners in receipt of tax credits and child tax credits that will lose most in the changes to the benefit system commencing from April.

The TUC estimate that the government will claw back £4.4 billion of savings from millions of working households. This is despite the minimum wage increase.

In Scotland, 197,000 households are in receipt of tax credits and a further 347,500 receive child tax credits. From April, the earnings threshold for entitlement will be cut from £6,420 to £3,850.

After this amount, the amount given per pound will be reduced from 48 to 41 pence. In April 2017, the family award of £545 will also stop. For some, this might mean the cost of a child’s school lunch.

‘Struggle’

‘Jane’ and ‘Jim’ both work for a large supermarket chain. Jim works 37 hours a week while Jane who has just returned to work after maternity leave works 20 hours a week they have three children including a new baby. They have been told they will lose £1,500 in tax credits.

“I don’t know how we will manage” said Jane.

“That’s nearly £30 a week, which is a lot for us. We have cut back already but it is going to be a struggle.”

Unfortunately too in April 2017 they will be even more people affected, as child tax credits will only be paid to the first two children.



NO TORY ANSWERS TO TORY PROBLEMS: the Tory government’s ‘solution’ to low incomes is to encourage people to work extra hours. But just finding work is difficult, and many jobs only offer Zero Hours Contracts, which don’t pay the bills PHOTO: Craig Maclean

Mike works 37 hours a week. His wife does not work since giving up employment due to ill health. He thinks he will lose £2,300 in April.

“When we had two wages coming in when Jacqui (his wife) worked, we were okay but it is going to be difficult. They tell us to find more hours but I already work full-time and anyhow there is no overtime going.”

The government’s solution to families’ shortfalls in incomes is to encourage them to work extra hours. But in this present economic climate, finding work (never mind paid extra hours) is difficult for many.

As an Iain Duncan Smith bonus when Universal Credit rolls in, if extra hours are available, even if they do not meet the needs of family circumstances, the payment may be reduced to reflect the money due if they worked additional hours. This was just one of the announcements at the Tory Party Conference this week.

The message was emphasised this week that being in work must pay. The catchphrase of the week was that Britain must become a high pay, low tax, low benefit economy.

This does not of course affect the global corporations such as Facebook who were revealed this week to have paid less tax in a whole year than most workers.

Tax Credits prop up the poverty wages paid by many employers. The increase in wages with the decrease in tax credits will see people delving further into poverty.

Hard work was another theme of the Tory Conference. Of course they are all keen on it—it is the only route out of poverty. There is no mention of the benefits having a private education and wealth can bring. Iain Duncan Smith exhorted the sick and disabled, many of whom cannot work to do so and not rely on benefits. Hunt, in a break from his

thoughts on how to destroy the education system, encouraged workers to be more like Chinese and American workers.

We have seen the reports of the atrocious working conditions of many Chinese workers paid very little to produce items for the West. Where we want the lowest price possible.

In the US, some workers have to travel hundreds of miles to get to work and have to rely on food stamps.

Like the UK, the steel towns and areas of great industry are mostly gone.

The markets have moved on to where the goods can be produced more cheaply, usually at a worker’s expense.

Work should be available for all but support should be given to those who need it.

Despite the Tories wanting to claim the centre of politics the people who they claim to want to represent will suffer most.

Again it is the poor who will be most affected as well as the hard working families they claim to represent.

Benefit cuts

So far the shifts in benefit cuts have been gradual but the next round coming in April will hit many hard—27,000 families in Glasgow alone according to TUC research.

The Tories say those in work will be better off than those on benefits but this will be *after* the planned cuts in tax credits. Times will become increasingly difficult for many.

The SNP and Corbyn’s Labour party claim to be anti-austerity. Time will tell but actions, not sweeping statements, are required.

It is time to start a resistance and empower people to stand against the cuts which will impact on many before individuals feel completely alone and powerless.

Face up to the cuts and show them for what they really are—a war on the poor!

by Colin Fox, SSP
national co-spokesperson

SNP ship listing to the right

“THE SNP claim a radical mantle while advocating orthodox centrist policies... a gap has always existed between their rhetoric and its record in government.”

David Torrance, the right wing columnist writing in *The Herald* in September, may have had an inkling the SNP were about to privatise Scotland’s non-domestic water supply when he wrote those words. For their decision to sell it off to Anglian Water Board is typical of the SNP.

Infrastructure Minister Keith Brown’s press release announcing the privatisation of water services to public buildings such as the Scottish Parliament, hospitals, schools, prisons and army barracks met with an angry response.

It represented “the best deal for Scotland,” he claimed, before adding, “given the rules we faced.” Defending the deal, he suggested the public purse would save £40million as a result of the £360million sell off.

But this line was soon replaced by the rather more defensive “we did not want to privatise...but we had no choice. EU competition rules forced us to do it.”

Expert evidence

When RISE produced evidence from experts at Glasgow University to show that EU rules allowed them to opt out of privatisation on social or environmental grounds they shifted tack again to argue it was not EU rules but a law passed at Holyrood in 2005 that applied. But that was a law the SNP had voted for (as indeed had every other party except the SSP)!

As this episode demonstrates, the nationalists like to appear left wing whilst acting right wing—the classic nationalist fault line.

And whilst the nationalists appear omnipotent, winning every political contest there is from local council by-elections to Holyrood opinion polls that may all be about to change. The case



‘SELFIE ANYONE?’ SNP infrastructure minister Keith Brown angered many with his feeble excuses after the Scottish Government privatised Scotland’s non-domestic water supply

against the Edinburgh West MP Michelle Thomson has also damaged the ‘business friendly’ SNP. Whilst most observers expect no criminal charges against her the moral case is damning.

This leader of ‘Business for Scotland’ had the SNP whip withdrawn after several ‘predatory’ financial deals revealed she had swindled vulnerable families out of the true value of their homes. These allegations were so unsavoury Nicola Sturgeon immediately and unusually distanced herself from the new MP.

The SNP would dearly love to present this story as another ‘unionist plot’—as they do every criticism of their party—but have decided a by-election is now necessary in Edinburgh West.

And it is one they do not expect to hold. Jeremy Corbyn has also exposed the SNP’s claim to be left wing on several counts—even though he cannot get Labour to deliver on any of his desires himself. Alex Salmond condemned

Corbyn for not singing the national anthem (including the third verse which talks about ‘crushing the rebellious Scots’) or bowing on bended knee when he joins the Privy Council, something Nicola Sturgeon PC and Alex Salmond PC have done.

And on public ownership of the energy industry, Corbyn was attacked by the SNP’s Fergus Ewing who claimed the idea—popular with a majority of Scottish voters—was ludicrous.

Add to these debacles for the SNP their evident double-dealing on fracking, their privatisation of Edinburgh’s Sick Kids hospital and their claims to be anti-austerity when making cuts and it is rather the nationalists ‘radical mantle’ that is ludicrous.

Their record at Holyrood is also poor. Their ‘managerialism’ is no different from their predecessor Lord Jack McConnell. In power at Holyrood for nearly ten years, they have challenged little and changed little. They promised to

scrap the unfair Council Tax and have kept it in place for a decade. Their deliberately ambiguous slogan ‘standing up for Scotland’ fails to distinguish which Scotland they mean? To paraphrase Billy Bragg ‘Being anti-Labour is not enough in days like these’.

And their refusal to include a second referendum in their 2016 manifesto for fear of alienating conservative voters in the North East of Scotland and elsewhere illustrates their ‘orthodoxy’. Unlike the SNP however, RISE, Scotland’s Left Alliance, does support another referendum within the lifetime of the parliament.

We recognise the crucial need for such a new mandate. Without it the independence movement is in a much weaker position.

RISE is an important ingredient in maximising the strength of the independence movement. That movement does not belong to the SNP and we reiterate supporting Scotland’s democratic right to self-determination does not make you a nationalist, it makes you a democrat.

Socialist principles

Scotland has changed politically beyond all recognition in the last two years. And yet it has changed too little for Scotland’s working class majority.

We face greater exploitation at work, our public services continue to be privatised and downgraded, inequalities widen, the vulnerable, the sick, elderly and children alike are often left behind, discarded by a system with no further use for them.

Scottish politics is in a period of great flux. Looming large is another economic recession precipitated by the dramatic decline in the Chinese economy.

It has dramatic implications and only an unequivocal commitment to socialist principles will protect the interests of Scotland’s working class majority.

by Jack Ferguson

Failed demolition a symbol for housing policy failure

LAST YEAR, Glasgow City Council and their partners announced the bizarre plan of demolishing Glasgow's Red Road flats during the opening ceremony of the Commonwealth Games. It was meant as a celebration of the end of social housing, but was prevented by a storm of public protest.

When the demolition finally did come, it was a spectacular botched job, which was a much better symbol of the failures of decades of Scottish housing policy.

Since the Thatcher years, publicly owned housing has been systematically sold off, given away and deliberately run down. We have been encouraged to think that council houses are inherently flawed communities, and should be kept to a minimal supply only for people who have failed in the "natural aspiration" to home ownership.

The by-product of this is that the failures of housing policy are somehow the fault of tenants. The people who have spent a lot of time and money perpetrating this view and making it seem like common sense in Britain are mostly those who have seen financial benefits from the process.

These include developers, land owners and speculators involved in destroying publicly owned homes and replacing them with homes as financial assets. Then there are the political leaders at local and national who have allowed them to do it.

In Glasgow, when the entire public housing stock was transferred from control by the elected council to the Glasgow

Housing Association, it consisted of 81,000 homes. Today, almost half of these have been destroyed, with another 19,000 scheduled for sale or demolition.

Many felt that the Red Road flats, like the demolished Dundee multis and many other areas, had nothing inherently wrong with them that could not have been fixed with the necessary investment and refurbishment. This has not happened because authorities wanted everyone to see these places as unliveable.

But all over the world, high rise living in suitably heated and comfortable homes is considered highly desirable. The serious social problems they experienced during their history had more to do with generation after generation of cuts and neglect, that left them without the staff and services needed to make them habitable, and with the wholesale destruction of working class livelihoods and hope for the future by government policy. Social homes that have been destroyed often occupy prime sites which are freed up for private development.

Token social homes

Companies and councils love to trumpet their new developments, but these usually contain a tiny, token number of social homes to replace those that have been lost. The rest are meant for private sale, and exist to make a profit, not meet need. Needless to say, quality and standards of such homes is often low.

The primary way this has been established has been through the way that housing need is calculated, according to a mathematical model drawn up in 2003 by Heriot-Watt University. The assumption underlying is that a household should not be eligible for social housing if it is possible for them to afford anything at all in the private sector, even if this would leave them with virtually no income left over.

In other words, social housing is only for the poorest of the poor, people affected by the most severe social and economic difficulties. On top of this, it argues that the backlog of people waiting for a home needs to be cleared at the low rate of

10 per cent per year. In other words, it systematically underestimates the need for council housing, and even allows social landlords to claim that they have too many houses and should demolish some.

Meanwhile, people are pushed into mortgages or rents they can't afford, or into homelessness. The recent strike by homelessness case workers at Glasgow City Council brought into sharp relief just by how much councils are failing to meet their legal duty to house people, and the extent to which the system is in crisis. It doesn't have to be this way.

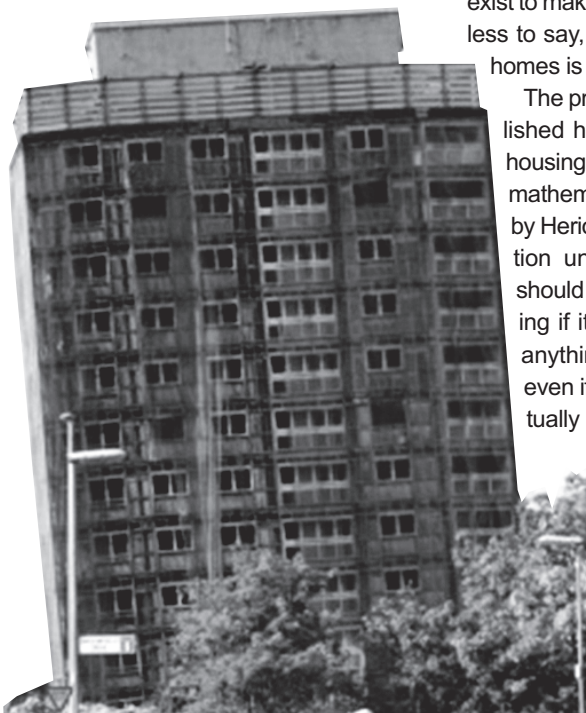
Ownership obsession

The peculiar British obsession with home ownership was deliberately fostered to create a certain kind of economy and society. Other countries in Europe still regard homes as places primarily for living rather than speculating financially.

Public housing schemes are truly mixed communities, with no stigma attached to them, available and used by people of all walks of life. Public housing should be, like universal health care and education, a universal public service available to all who want to use it. To achieve this requires a rebalancing of the economy away from financialisation, and a vigorous emergency programme of building new homes publicly on a mass scale to meet the desperate need that currently is not even counted.

These must be prepared to endure the rigours of climate change with the latest green technology, which can virtually eliminate many heating costs. We need a housing policy that sees providing decent homes for all as its goal, with less of a focus on ownership and more on quality of life. That means that public housing must be run in a more participatory, democratic and local way than it was in the past, with tenants having more control over, and freedom to personalise their homes.

Houses that have been bought under right to buy could be re-converted to public ownership with mortgage to rent schemes for owners. And radical land reform should allow space to be freed up to create communally owed housing co-operatives, a model that may well be suited to re-populating rural areas and reversing the clearances.



by Bill Bonnar

THE MASSACRE of members of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) and others in Ankara on 10 October represents a serious escalation of political violence in that country in the run up to the national election on 1 November.

There have already been a number of violent attacks mostly carried out by far right groups linked to the overtly fascist National Movement Party and the security forces. It also is another worrying sign that Turkey is being dragged into the wider conflict in the Syria.

While the bomb attacks were undoubtedly carried out by Islamic fundamentalist suicide bombers, the wider implications will reverberate around the country. Even without the historical conflict with Kurdish forces Turkey has a long history of political violence directed at left and progressive forces.

In the 1970s and '80s, right wing death squads called the Grey Wolves roamed the country murdering opponents of the then military dictatorship. So close were these groups to the security forces they were widely assumed to be the government's paramilitary wing.

Rising tensions

No wonder suspicious fingers were pointed at the government following the most recent outrage with people asking if there was government complicity in the attack and would the government now move to exploit rising tensions ahead of the next month's elections.

This election has been called after President Tayyip Erdoğan failed to win an outright majority in a similar election in June and as a result failed to push through a package of authoritarian reforms. Since then he has been ratcheting up tension arguing that the country is being destabilised by Kurdish forces and their Turkish allies. Opponents accuse him of trying to escalate vio-

PEACE DEMO MASSACRE: WHAT NEXT IN TURKEY?



DEADLY: the target of the massacre in Ankara was the People's Democratic Party, 'Turkey's Syriza', founded in 2012 from a coalition of left wing groups

lence against the pro-Kurdish HDP hoping to weaken it and rally other Turkish forces around his increasingly nationalist and authoritarian rhetoric.

It's clear that Erdoğan has been attempting to build a reactionary coalition of nationalist and Islamic forces united in the opposition to the enemy within; progressive, democratic and Kurdish forces and their external allies. Part of this has been fuelled by a growing social and economic crisis in the country.

Increased poverty, rocketing unemployment, particularly among young people, rising prices, an ever widening gap between rich and poor and cuts to social services such as health has all fuelled discontent.

The conflict with Kurds within Turkey has been growing in recent months; in part because of Turkish attacks on Kurdish forces in the war in neighbouring Syria. It is an example of how that conflict is now destabilising the entire region. 2,500,000 Syr-

ian refugees are living in refugee camps in Turkey; their number growing every day.

Turkey is now an increasingly active member of the international coalition against the Assad regime dragging the country into a wider regional conflict involving Saudi Arabia, Iran and more recently Russia.

Target

The target of the massacre in Ankara was the People's Democratic Party. Described as Turkey's Syriza it was founded in 2012 from a coalition of left wing groups. In the election in June it secured a major breakthrough, winning 13.2 per cent of the vote, 80 MPs and emerging as the third largest party in the country.

It describes itself as democratic socialist and anti-capitalist with a programme heavily weighted in terms of social justice, environmentalism, minority rights and women's equality. For candidates in elections it operates a 50 per cent quota for women and 10 per

cent quota for people from an LGBT background. Most of its support comes from the Kurdish community and it has consistently put forwards proposals for resolving the Turkish/Kurdish crisis.

With the election just a couple of weeks away the fear is that rising violence will drive voters into the hands of the ruling party and that Erdoğan will use this to further crack down on the Kurdish minority and parties such as the HDP. He will also increase his country's intervention in the conflict in Syria.

As the Tory Government, supported by significant numbers of Labour MPs, gears up vote to bomb Syria the anti-war movement in Scotland needs to step up its efforts.

Solidarity with the people of Syria and a negotiated settlement in that conflict and solidarity with left and progressive forces in Turkey now targeted, in part, because of their opposition to their government's role in the war.



21st Century Socialism event kicks off series of radical discussions

by Katie Bonnar and
Alexander Mackie

ON 10 October in Glasgow the Scottish Socialist Party hosted a highly successful 21st Century Socialism event. The aim was to bring the left together to discuss socialist ideas in the modern world and work towards a common programme for the left.

Since the referendum, the SSP has watched its numbers swell, with more young members than ever before. More than anything else this event was aimed at them. The main theme—what would a modern socialist Scotland look like?

With an opening and closing session and a

variety of workshops the event stimulated much debate.

Topics covered included; the Capitalist Climate Catastrophe; ISIS, Refugees and the West; Austerity, in Whose Interest; Indy Referendum 2, Corbyn and the EU; Dumbed Down Britain and How Do We Defeat the Trade Union Bill.

Most of the speakers were from the Scottish Socialist Party with others from across the left with the discussions on the environment and the refugee crisis the most prominent.

In the course of the day two ideas emerged consistently. The first is that while conditions may

change through time the basic principles of socialism remain constant.

The biggest challenge for socialists is to make our ideas and appealing and relevant; the common sense ideas of the age.

The second is that socialism is not about some utopian future. It is about the practical reorganisation of existing society.

The Herald estimated that around 600,000 people in Scotland are on the left. Issues such as support for a republic, renationalisation of key industries and the abolition of nuclear weapons have significant support.

They represent fertile ground as a group that can be won to a common

programme of the left. The 21st Century Socialism was part of this process.

This was just the first of regular events to be held under the 21st Century Socialism umbrella.

As part of the programme, an online discussion forum has been created which has already seen a lot of interesting and informative discussion.

There is also a plan for a blog which will allow members to research and write about a socialist issue that they identify with.

It is also further evidence of the continuing building of the SSP as Scotland's party of the left and of its efforts to build a wider left unity in Scotland.